

Currently, there are six nongovernmental organizations doing excellent democracy work in Iraq under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions. Our expectation is that \$96 million of the funds in our amendment would be allocated among the six organizations in the following way to continue their work in Iraq:

IFES would receive \$20 million. The International Research and Exchanges Board would receive \$6 million. The National Endowment for Democracy would receive \$10 million. The America's Development Foundation would receive \$16 million.

The National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute would each receive \$22 million. These funds would be in addition to the \$15 million that the administration has requested for these activities in fiscal year 07.

In each case, the additional funds are intended to be used by the organizations over the next 18 months to continue their current operations. I understand that each organization will need to submit a proposal to justify the use of funds before they can be made available.

Does the Senator from Kentucky agree with this allocation of funds?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yes, I do.

Mr. KENNEDY. Does the Senator from Vermont agree with this allocation of funds?

Mr. LEAHY. Yes, I do. And I would add that the amendment also provides that up to \$8.5 million should be made available to support the activities of the United States Institute of Peace in Iraq.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank the senior Senator from Kentucky, Mr. MCCONNELL, and the Senator from Vermont for their assistance on this amendment.

The amendment provides \$104.5 million for American nongovernmental organizations helping Iraqis to create the essential building blocks of democracy. It is cosponsored by Senators BIDEN and LEAHY.

Last year, Iraq passed several important milestones on the long road to democracy. However, as important as the two elections and the referendum on the constitution were, they were not decisive, and it is far from clear that democracy is being firmly established in Iraq.

The process of building democratic institutions is different and requires patience in developing effective governmental structures, a genuine rule of law, political parties committed to peaceful means, an active civil society, and a free press. Constructive international engagement is essential as well in the case of Iraq. For a country as heavily repressed as long as Iraq, democracy will take even longer to take root.

It is far from clear, however, that the Bush administration has a long-term strategy—or even a short-term strategy—to solidify and continue the

democratic gains that have been made so far.

American nongovernmental organizations such as the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, the National Endowment for Democracy, IFES, formerly known as the International Foundation for Election Systems, the International Research and Exchanges Board and America's Development Foundation are well respected in Iraq and throughout the world. Each has substantial operations in Iraq, and their work is essential to the administration's goal of building a stable democracy in Iraq.

Yet despite their success so far in helping to promote democracy and the enormous risks their employees take by working in the war zone, the administration has made no long-term commitment to provide funding for their work in Iraq. Each organization operates on pins and needles, never knowing when their funding for Iraq operations will dry up.

The American nongovernmental organization IFES has been in Iraq since October 2003. It has provided technical assistance in each of Iraq's elections so far, and it has been asked to provide such assistance for regional and provincial elections scheduled for April 2007.

It is also preparing for a possible second referendum on the constitution, and is assisting as well in the enactment and implementation of legislation governing the operations of a new election council for local elections.

Inexplicably, funding will run out in June, and the administration has not yet committed any additional funds. None of the funds in this supplemental spending bill are set aside for it, and none of the meager \$63 million requested in the fiscal year 2007 budget for democracy-building is intended for IFES either. Our amendment would provide \$20 million to sustain its democracy work in Iraq for the next 18 months, through the end of fiscal year 2007.

An independent media is also essential to a successful democracy. A U.S. nongovernmental organization, the International Research and Exchanges Board—IREX is working in Iraq to see that the Iraqi people have independent, professional, high quality news and public affairs information. To create an environment in which a free press can flourish, it is also seeking to establish a legal, regulatory, and policy environment that supports independent media.

IREX's funding for these important programs is also running out, and it will be forced to close its operations this summer, which would pull the rug out from under many struggling new press organizations in Iraq. Our amendment would provide \$6 million to sustain IREX's democracy work in Iraq for the next 18 months.

In addition, the nongovernmental organization America's Development Foundation provides essential aid to

support and sustain civil society in Iraq. ADF and its partner civil society organizations in Iraq have provided training and assistance to thousands of Iraqi government officials at the national, regional, and local level on issues such as anticorruption, transparency, accountability, fiscal responsibility, whistleblower protection, and the development of nongovernmental organizations.

ADF wants to continue its work, but its funding will end in June. USAID supports this work and has a contract pending, but it doesn't have the resources to fulfill it. Our amendment provides \$16 million to sustain its work over the next 18 months. Similarly, the National Endowment for Democracy has no clear sense of what the future holds for them in Iraq.

Two of the endowment's core grantees—the Center for International Private Enterprise and the Labor Solidarity Center in Iraq—have important democracy promotion functions.

Since opening a regional office in Baghdad in October 2003, the Center for International Private Enterprise has worked to build capacity for market oriented democratic reform in Iraq. It has provided training and grant support to approximately 22 Iraqi business associations and chambers of commerce.

The Labor Solidarity Center works directly with Iraqi trade unions to develop skills in strengthening independent and democratic trade unions.

In addition, the endowment partners with 32 local organizations on the ground in Iraq to promote and sustain civil society projects on political development, raising awareness of women's rights, and encouraging the free flow of information to Iraqi citizens.

The endowment wants to continue working directly with the Iraqi people and be able to guarantee continuity in its democracy grants to Iraqi organizations. But no funding is set aside in this bill or in the fiscal year 2007 budget for its programs.

Our amendment provides \$10 million to sustain the democracy programs of the Center for International Private Enterprise, the Labor Solidarity Center, and the Endowment for Democracy's local partners for 18 months. Similarly, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute—are doing truly impressive work in Iraq under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

The International Republican Institute programs in Iraq have focused on three principal goals: development of an issue-based political party system; establishment of the foundation for a more transparent and responsive government; and the emergence of an active and politically involved civil society.

The National Democratic Institute supports a number of democracy programs in Iraq as well, with emphasis on political parties, governance, civil society and women's rights. It has four offices in Iraq to promote these essential